

understood. He knew of nothing in Maryland, which had more seriously conduced to the glorious "uncertainty of the law," than this condition of things.

Mr. SPENCER. Is not the evil to be attributed as much to the administration of the law?

Mr. BRENT. I think not. I think the evil lies mainly in the legislation of the State, for the reasons I have given.

Mr. B. then proceeded to remark, that the experience of the State, under biennial sessions, had not been long. But there had been an interval between two sessions of the Legislature, and what was the condition of the State? Was she not as thriving as before? Were not her fields as productive—her soil as kind and generous—her people as happy—and their rights as well protected, as they had been under annual sessions of the Legislature? Gentlemen knew that such was the fact. The State was as prosperous, and her interests as well guarded, and they would continue to be so under biennial, as under annual sessions. The Legislature, at its last session, had done as much as was required by the interests of the State. There were some measures—such as a general assessment law—which had failed, from want of time perhaps, or some other cause. But gentlemen were to bear in mind, that this was not the first time, that measures had been crowded into the last days of the session, and not been acted upon for want of time.

He believed, then, that biennial sessions would be for the interest of the State. If the Legislature, meeting biennially, could perform the duties required from it, that would be all that was necessary, and an annual saving would be effected of twenty-five thousand dollars. This was an expense which he wished to avoid, and it ought to be avoided, unless there were strong and overpowering reasons, why the money should be expended.

It had been said that perpetual vigilance was the price of liberty. No doubt it was so. But was that perpetual vigilance to be exercised exclusively through the Legislature of the State? If it were so, then the meetings of that body would, of necessity, be perpetual. But it was not the Legislature, which was to be the sole guardian of our liberties. The people themselves were to be vigilant. Their agents were to be vigilant—their Governor, to whose keeping they had confided their honor and their interests, was to be ever upon the watch. There was also another mighty sentinel upon the watch-tower of liberty—that was the giant press. Whenever our institutions were threatened in their strongholds, its voice would be heard from the mountain peaks to old ocean's wave, sounding the alarm and awakening the freemen of the land to action.

Mr. B. then remarked, that his opinion in relation to biennial sessions, were modified by the circumstances that surrounded him. He believed that a Constitution would be passed, and that it would be adopted by the people at the ballot-box. That Constitution would impose very onerous duties

upon the Legislature, for some time after its adoption. He should, therefore, vote in favor of two annual sessions, to enable the Legislature to carry out the provisions of the new organic law. And if no other gentleman moved an amendment to that effect, he would do so. He also expressed his intention to urge the adoption of a provision empowering the Governor, when, in his judgment, the exigencies of the State might require it, to call a special session of the Legislature.

For these reasons, he could not vote for the proposition of his able and distinguished colleague, (Mr. Merrick.)

After a brief explanation by Mr. SPENCER,

Mr. CHAMBERS of Kent, said, he would endeavor to add a few words, without repeating arguments already urged in favor of biennial sessions.

The reasons assigned for annual sessions, resolved themselves into these two—first, the inability of the Legislature to perform all the duty required by the interest of the State, and second, the want of necessary supervision over the treasury of the State and its officers.

As to the first, it happened that the laws of the session of 1849, the first of the biennial sessions, lay upon the adjoining desk in the service of his next neighbor, and when the accumulation of duty was remarked upon in the course of debate, he had opened to the middle of the volume, and found that more than one half of the whole number of laws, were passed within the last four days of the session. He believed in some of the States, a whole session has not lasted beyond four days. He was aware that many of these laws of 1849, had been in some progress before the day on which they bear date—some of them nearly consummated, but still it was true the great part of the business of every session was performed in the last few days.

He had passed the last thirty winters in this city, with the exception of nine years, while he held a seat in the Senate of the United States, and it was as well known to him, as it was to every one who was conversant with these matters, that in the early part of the session, members were enjoying themselves in social and agreeable indulgencies. He did not allude to this in the way of reproach—not at all. It was characteristic of the species. Man is naturally a self-indulgent and indolent being—essentially a creature of appetite and passion. Some motive must excite him to toil and labor. When it became necessary, the members would and did devote themselves to their serious duties.

The fact that they did so only after a considerable portion of the session had elapsed, proved his position, that less time was necessary than it was now contended was required. With regard to the supervision over the Treasury, and a strict eye upon accounting officers, he must say he had not much faith in the influence of investigating committees, or in the "grand inquest." He asked gentlemen when and where defaulters had been detected and exposed by such committees.

Experience taught us differently. Such defaulters generally had the ability and the means to